

РОЗДІЛ 6
ДИСКУСІЇ НА СТОРІНКАХ ГАЗЕТИ «DIE ZEIT» ЩОДО
ЗАПРОВАДЖЕННЯ ОBOB'ЯЗКОВОЇ ПОЧАТКОВОЇ ВІЙ-
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МОЛОДІ

DISCUSSIONS IN THE PAGES OF THE NEWSPAPER «DIE
ZEIT» ON THE INTRODUCTION OF COMPULSORY INITIAL
BASIC MILITARY TRAINING FOR
GERMAN SCHOOL YOUTH

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of defense capability and military training for young people in modern Europe has taken on particular significance amid growing security challenges, the transformation of the international order, and a reevaluation of approaches to national defense. Following the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, many European countries have intensified discussions on strengthening their defense capabilities, particularly through the involvement of young people in various forms of basic military training. In this context, the issue of introducing mandatory basic military training for school-age youth has once again come to the fore in Germany as one of the tools for building societal defense readiness.

The German press, particularly the authoritative publication «Die Zeit», serves as an important platform for public and political debate on this issue. The pages of this newspaper feature diverse viewpoints from politicians, experts, educators, and public figures, reflecting a broad spectrum of opinions on the appropriateness and potential consequences of introducing military training for schoolchildren. An analysis of these publications allows us to trace how public narratives are formed, the arguments of the initiative's supporters and opponents, and how the media influence public opinion and the political agenda.

The relevance of this study also stems from the need to examine the role of media discourse in shaping the security policies of modern states. An analysis of the discussions in «Die Zeit» reveals the key arguments, ideological approaches, and public sentiments surrounding

the issue of military training for young people, and helps to understand the interplay between the media, politics, and the education system.

Furthermore, research on this topic is important for a broader comparative analysis of approaches to military-patriotic education of youth in European countries. For Ukraine, which is facing prolonged armed aggression and is actively reforming its national security and education systems, studying the German media discourse on military training for schoolchildren may have additional academic and practical value. Thus, an analysis of discussions in the German press allows not only for a deeper understanding of internal social processes in Germany but also for identifying broader trends in the development of security policy in contemporary Europe.

In current political debates on security in the Federal Republic of Germany, the role of young people in the national defense system is a topic of active discussion. This issue gained particular attention following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, which significantly impacted the strategic positions of leading European countries and spurred discussions on defense policy reforms. In German public and political discourse, the focus is not only on armaments and the modernization of the armed forces, but also on how to foster public support and understanding of these processes among citizens themselves, particularly among young people.

As one of Germany's most influential publications, the newspaper «Die Zeit» plays a key role in shaping and reflecting public opinion on complex socio-political issues. Its coverage regularly features in-depth analyses, interviews with experts, and open discussions that encompass a wide range of viewpoints. This is precisely why «Die Zeit» serves as a representative corpus for studying how the media in Germany covers the issue of the possible reinstatement of military training for young people and its potential inclusion in school education.

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the arguments of proponents and opponents of mandatory basic military training for schoolchildren as presented in «Die Zeit»; to identify key thematic narratives; and to examine how these relate to Germany's overall political logic regarding security and civic education.

In this study, the issue is examined through the lens of three main areas: the historical and political context of the debate; the arguments of those in favor of military training for young people; and critical perspectives that highlight the ethical and educational risks.

The analysis is based on a qualitative content analysis of publications from «Die Zeit» covering the period 2022–2025, including articles, editorials, interviews, and opinion pieces. This approach allows us to identify not only obvious positions but also the underlying ideological narratives that form the basis of contemporary media debates on war, security, and civic responsibility.

1. Historical and political background of the discussion

The issue of military training for young people in Germany has a complex historical background that has taken shape over several centuries of the development of German statehood, political culture, and the educational system. Current discussions regarding the possibility of introducing basic military training for schoolchildren cannot be understood without taking into account the historical traditions of the military organization of society, as well as the experience of the militarization and demilitarization of the state in the 20th century.

In the 19th century, Prussian military reforms—implemented following Prussia’s defeat in the wars against Napoleon—played a significant role in shaping German military culture. These reforms led to the establishment of a system of universal military service, which became the foundation of the state’s military organization. The army was viewed not only as an instrument of defense but also as an important mechanism for shaping civic consciousness.

As German historian G. Munkler notes, in the 19th century, military service became one of the key institutions for the socialization of citizens: «The army in Prussia was not merely a military structure, but a school of citizenship where discipline, responsibility, and loyalty to the state were instilled»²⁴⁸.

Following the establishment of the German Empire in 1871, the system of universal military service became one of the fundamental elements of state policy. Military service was viewed as the duty of every citizen, and education served to prepare young people to fulfill this duty. The experience of the militarization of youth during the National Socialist regime is of particular significance for contemporary discussions. In the 1930s, the state actively utilized the educational

²⁴⁸ Münkler, H. *Der Wandel des Krieges*. Berlin: Rowohlt, 2018. S. 54.

system and youth organizations to shape a generation ready for military service and to support the regime's ideology.

The «Hitler Youth» played a central role in this process, effectively serving to prepare young people for military service. As German historian N. Frei notes: «The Hitler Youth became one of the key instruments of political and military mobilization of the younger generation in Germany»²⁴⁹.

During this period, military training was integrated into the education system, leading to the widespread militarization of young people. It was this historical experience that largely shaped German society's postwar attitude toward any form of military training for children and adolescents.

The relationship between education, civic responsibility, and national defense has deep historical roots in Germany. After World War II, German society underwent a long process of rethinking its role in the global security system, which shaped a unique political culture focused on pacifism, responsibility, and control over the military sphere.

Following the end of World War II, the Allies implemented a sweeping policy of demilitarizing Germany. Military structures were dismantled, and society underwent a profound transformation of its political culture. In 1949, a new state was established—the Federal Republic of Germany. The formation of a new security system took place amid the Cold War and the need to integrate the country into Western defense structures. In 1955, Germany joined NATO and established its own armed forces – the Bundeswehr. At the same time, the state's new military policy was fundamentally different from previous historical models. One of the key principles was the concept of «Staatsbürger in Uniform» (citizen in uniform). It envisaged the integration of military service into a democratic system of values. Former German Defense Minister Thomas de Maizière emphasized: «A Bundeswehr soldier is first and foremost a citizen of a democratic state who acts in accordance with the Constitution and the values of a free society»²⁵⁰.

²⁴⁹ Frei, N. 1945 und wir. München: Beck, 2015, S. 112.

²⁵⁰ De Maizière, T. Regierung und Streitkräfte in der Demokratie. Berlin: Springer, 2017. S. 23.

This concept became the foundation of the modern German model of civil-military relations. In 1955, the creation of the Bundeswehr became an important symbol of a new beginning for the Federal Republic of Germany within NATO. At the same time, this did not mean a return to traditional military culture; on the contrary, defense had a clearly defined character—limited sovereignty, parliamentary control, and a strict separation between civilian and military life²⁵¹.

In 1956, universal military service (Wehrpflicht) was introduced for young men aged 18 to 45, and it remained a key component of West Germany's defense policy throughout the Cold War. Military service served not only as a source of manpower but also, to a certain extent, functioned as a sociocultural institution that forged new bonds between the state and the citizen²⁵².

However, with the end of the Cold War and the changing international landscape, the relevance of the traditional model of military service increasingly became a subject of debate. Arguments against compulsory service focused on issues of effectiveness, social justice, and adaptation to new forms of hybrid warfare, which required highly skilled military personnel²⁵³.

This debate reached its climax in 2011, when the German government decided to suspend compulsory military service²⁵⁴. Official documents and government statements emphasized that modern security challenges, particularly operations outside national territory, require a professional army rather than universal service for all citizens. This approach reflected changes in the nature of military service, but it also raised new questions about how the state could ensure public understanding and support for its defense policy in the future.

However, within a few years it became clear that the new model had certain problems, particularly regarding personnel recruitment. A series of articles in the newspaper «Die Zeit» noted that the

²⁵¹ Schmidt, H. Verantwortung Deutschlands in Europa. München: C.H. Beck, 2017. S. 32.

²⁵² Bundesministerium der Verteidigung. Weißbuch zur Sicherheitspolitik und zur Zukunft der Bundeswehr. Berlin, 2016. S. 18–19.

²⁵³ Bald, D. Die Bundeswehr: Eine kritische Geschichte 1955–2020. München: Beck, 2020. S. 145–147.

²⁵⁴ Hacke, C. Die Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Berlin: Ullstein, 2018. S. 220.

Bundeswehr was facing a personnel shortage and needed new approaches to building up its reserves²⁵⁵.

Despite the suspension of universal conscription, the idea of some form of civic or national defense duty for young people has not disappeared from the political agenda. In the 2020s, the issue of reinstating or reforming military service periodically arose in parliamentary debates and expert circles, but it only gained significant momentum after 2022.

In his speech to the Bundestag on February 27, 2022, Chancellor Olaf Scholz stated: «Wir erleben eine Zeitenwende. Das bedeutet: Die Welt danach ist nicht mehr dieselbe wie die Welt davor.»²⁵⁶. This statement effectively marked the beginning of a new era in German security policy. As part of this strategy, a special fund of 100 billion euros was established to modernize the Bundeswehr.

Against the backdrop of new security challenges, discussions regarding the role of young people in the defense system have intensified once again in Germany. In 2024, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier stated: «Wir müssen neu darüber nachdenken, wie junge Menschen Verantwortung für die Sicherheit unseres Landes übernehmen können»²⁵⁷. This statement sparked a new political debate regarding the possible reinstatement of compulsory military service or the introduction of alternative forms of service.

The outbreak of full-scale war in Ukraine has significantly altered the landscape of political discourse in Europe. For Germany, which traditionally refrained from playing an active military role in the 20th century, this has been a serious test. The newspaper «Die Zeit» has become an important platform for discussing these issues. In their articles, journalists and experts analyze various aspects of defense policy. For example, Alan Posener notes in an article on military-political education in schools: «Wer über Sicherheitspolitik mitreden will, muss

²⁵⁵ Hitzler, E. Rein in die gute Stube. *Die Zeit*. 2025. Nr. 15. S. 9.

²⁵⁶ Scholz, O. (2022, February 27). Policy statement by Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz to the German Bundestag on the current situation. Federal Government of Germany. <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/service/policy-statement-by-olaf-scholz-chancellor-of-the-federal-republic-of-germany-and-member-of-the-german-bundestag-27-february-2022-in-berlin-2008378>

²⁵⁷ Steinmeier, F.-W. Reden zur Sicherheitspolitik. Berlin, 2024. S. 22.

verstehen, wie Armeen funktionieren»²⁵⁸. Other authors emphasize the need to foster a broader understanding of security issues among young people.

Numerous articles in «Die Zeit» mark a shift in the tone of the discourse: from purely technocratic debates on defense spending to broader societal discussions about civic responsibility and the role of young people in the security agenda.

As Rudzio notes in the article: «... Die Wehrpflichtdebatte kehrt zurück, aber in einer neuen Form – nicht als starre Pflicht für alle, sondern als Teil eines erweiterten Konzepts nationaler Verantwortung...»²⁵⁹. It is emphasized here that the debate over the reinstatement of universal military service has a fundamentally different focus than past practices. Instead of a one-dimensional mandatory service, the discussion now centers on how civil society can play a more active role in security processes without compromising democratic freedoms.

Another article in «Die Zeit» highlights the link between education and democratic participation: «... Bildung und Sicherheit gehören zusammen – aber nicht im Sinne militärischer Indoktrination, sondern im Verständnis von Verantwortung für das Gemeinwesen ...»²⁶⁰. This statement emphasizes that, in media discourse, the issue of defense is not limited to military equipment or service, but extends to the question of fostering active citizenship.

In contemporary German political discourse, the question of the role of young people in the national security system is becoming increasingly relevant. This is due both to changes in the international security environment and to internal transformations within German society.

Following the suspension of universal conscription in 2011, Germany adopted a professional army model that relies heavily on voluntary recruitment. However, over the past decade, it has become clear that this model has certain limitations, particularly those related

²⁵⁸ Posener, A. Für Wehrkunde im Schulunterricht. *Die Zeit*. 2022. Nr. 23. S. 3.

²⁵⁹ Rudzio, W. Die Wehrpflichtdebatte kehrt zurück. *Die Zeit*. 2023. Nr. 18. S. 5.

²⁶⁰ Müller, T. Bildung und Sicherheit gehören zusammen. *Die Zeit*. 2024. Nr. 7. S. 13.

to a shortage of recruits and the Bundeswehr's growing personnel needs.

As German security policy researcher K. Masala notes, the modern German army faces new challenges: «Die Bundeswehr befindet sich in einer Situation struktureller Überforderung, weil ihre Aufgaben wachsen, während ihre personellen Ressourcen begrenzt bleiben»²⁶¹. In this context, the political community is increasingly raising the issue of the need to build a larger pool of qualified citizens.

One of the central themes of the current political debate in Germany is the possibility of reinstating compulsory military service or establishing new forms of mandatory public service. German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier has repeatedly emphasized the importance of a public discussion on this issue. In 2023, he stated: «Ein verpflichtendes Gesellschaftsjahr könnte helfen, den Zusammenhalt unserer Gesellschaft zu stärken»²⁶².

This proposal provides for the possibility of young people undertaking various forms of service – military, social, or civilian. At the same time, a significant number of politicians and public figures have expressed skepticism about reinstating compulsory military service. Critics point out that modern German society differs significantly from what it was during the Cold War and requires new approaches to ensuring defense capabilities.

One of the key aspects of current discussions is the role of the education system in shaping what is known as a «culture of security» (Sicherheitskultur). In this context, the possibility of integrating elements of security and defense education into the school curriculum is being considered. Proponents of this approach emphasize that today's students should have a basic understanding of the principles of international security, the functioning of the armed forces, and the state's role in ensuring defense. In an article published in the newspaper «Die Zeit», journalist A. Posener notes: «Wer in einer Demokratie über Krieg und Frieden mitentscheiden soll, muss zumindest verstehen, wie militärische Strukturen funktionieren»²⁶³.

²⁶¹ Masala, C. *Weltunordnung*. München: Beck, 2022. S. 77.

²⁶² Steinmeier, F.-W. *Reden zur Sicherheitspolitik*. Berlin, 2023. S.32.

²⁶³ Posener, A. Für Wehrkunde im Schulunterricht. *Die Zeit*. 2022. Nr. 23. S. 3.

Thus, the focus is not so much on military training in the traditional sense as on fostering a broader understanding of security processes.

At the same time, there is significant criticism within German society of the idea of introducing military training in schools. Many education experts emphasize the need to preserve the civilian nature of the education system. As educator S. Reinhardt notes: «Die Schule darf kein Ort militärischer Rekrutierung werden, sondern muss ein Raum demokratischer Bildung bleiben»²⁶⁴. This stance reflects a deeply ingrained desire within German society to avoid any form of militarization of education.

The media play a significant role in shaping public attitudes toward the issue of military training for young people. The German press actively covers discussions regarding defense policy and the role of the military in society. The weekly newspaper «Die Zeit» occupies a special place in this process, traditionally serving as a platform for intellectual and political debate. An analysis of the publication's articles reveals several main discursive positions: a security-political position (emphasizing the need to strengthen defense capabilities and build a reserve of trained citizens); a civic-educational position (stressing the importance of security education without direct military training); the critical-pacifist position (opposes any form of militarization of education). For example, E. Hitzler's article notes that the problem of personnel shortages in the Bundeswehr requires new solutions²⁶⁵. At the same time, other authors point out young people's skepticism toward military service²⁶⁶.

Discussions regarding military training for young people are taking place not only in Germany but also in many other European countries. Since 2014, a number of countries have revised their approaches to military service. For example, Sweden and Lithuania have reinstated compulsory military service, while France has introduced the Service national universel program. As researcher P. Krüger notes: «Die sicherheitspolitischen Entwicklungen in Europa führen dazu, dass viele

²⁶⁴ Reinhardt, S. Demokratie lernen. *Die Zeit*. 2022. Nr. 11. S. 14.

²⁶⁵ Hitzler, E. Rein in die gute Stube. *Die Zeit*. 2025. Nr. 15. S. 9.

²⁶⁶ Bittner, L., & Otto, J. Ich möchte nicht für dieses Land sterben. *Die Zeit*. 2025. Nr. 52. S. 12.

Staaten ihre Modelle der militärischen Nachwuchsgewinnung neu überdenken»²⁶⁷.

In this context, Germany is also being forced to rethink its defense policy. Let us therefore examine the arguments of both supporters and opponents of reinstating basic military training for German schoolchildren.

2. Arguments in favor of basic military training for German schoolchildren in the media discourse of «Die Zeit»

In the media discourse presented in the pages of «Die Zeit», a powerful narrative is gradually taking shape that links the modernization of Germany's security system to the need to rethink traditional approaches to the role of young people in society. Following the abolition of universal military service in 2011 and the onset of large-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022, the attention of a significant portion of the German political intelligentsia has once again turned to the question of how to reconcile the state's defense capabilities with active citizenship²⁶⁸.

One of the key arguments put forward by proponents of introducing at least some elements of basic military training for high school students is the need to ensure that the public provides informed support for defense policy. In this context, «Die Zeit» has published numerous articles highlighting the lack of knowledge about security among young people: «Viele junge Deutsche wissen mehr über globale Popkultur als über die Struktur und Aufgaben ihrer eigenen Streitkräfte»²⁶⁹. This message is repeated in several articles, indicating that a general consensus is emerging regarding the need for better civic and security education.

Supporters of this idea emphasize that today's challenges – from cybersecurity to hybrid threats – require not only professional military personnel but also a society capable of understanding the nature of these processes. «Die Zeit» puts it clearly: «Es geht nicht primär um

²⁶⁷ Krüger, P. Wehrpflicht in Europa. *Die Zeit*. 2025. Nr. 12. S. 8.

²⁶⁸ Weber, F. Nach der Zeitenwende: Sicherheitspolitik im Umbruch. *Die Zeit*. 2023. Nr. 15. S. 10.

²⁶⁹ Albrecht, M. Über Sicherheit sprechen. *Die Zeit*. 2022. Nr. 42. S. 8.

Soldaten, sondern um Bürgerinnen und Bürger, die die Sicherheitspolitik verstehen und mittragen»²⁷⁰. The emphasis here is not on militarization, but on creating the conditions for an informed civic choice.

A series of articles in «Die Zeit» suggests that incorporating elements of basic military training into school curricula could help lay the educational foundation for a culture of defense. Here, «military training» is understood more broadly than just teaching combat skills: it refers to a basic orientation in the structure of national security, the mechanisms of international cooperation, and the principles of democratic control over the military²⁷¹.

Indeed, one of the authors notes: «Die Schule ist kein Kasernenhof, aber sie sollte Orte haben, wo über Verteidigung gesprochen wird, ohne Waffen, aber mit klarem Verständnis»²⁷². This wording reflects the view that education should promote understanding rather than serve as a tool for propaganda. It emphasizes that subjects with elements of defense-related content can be integrated into the humanities, particularly in courses on history, sociology, or civic education.

This line of reasoning also addresses the issue of civic duty, which extends far beyond traditional military service. Among proponents of this view, a concept known as the «mandatory civic year» (Pflichtjahr) has emerged, which would include both military and civilian forms of service: «Ein Pflichtjahr bedeutet nicht Uniformen für alle, sondern Engagement für die Gesellschaft in unterschiedlichen Formen»²⁷³. This underscores the desire to integrate the defense and social aspects of civilian life, going beyond the traditional model of military service.

Another important argument in favor of basic military training is that it strengthens the younger generation's sense of confidence and responsibility in a complex global environment. An article in «Die Zeit» notes that contemporary challenges—including threats of destabilization, climate change, and cyberattacks – create situations in which young people need to understand basic defense mechanisms²⁷⁴.

²⁷⁰ Schmidt, P. Sicherheitspolitik verstehen. *Die Zeit*. 2023. Nr. 3, S. 12.

²⁷¹ Becker, A. Bildung und Sicherheit. *Die Zeit*. 2023, Nr. 8. S. 7.

²⁷² Fuchs, T. Schule und Staat. *Die Zeit*. 2024. Nr. 5. S. 15.

²⁷³ Krüger, H. Pflichtjahr für alle? *Die Zeit*. 2023. Nr. 21. S. 4.

²⁷⁴ Lange, S. Kompetenzen in einer unsicheren Welt. *Die Zeit*. 2024. Nr. 2. S. 9.

To support this view, we can cite statements found in the pages of the journal: «Kompetenz in Sicherheitsfragen bedeutet Selbstbewusstsein und Verantwortungsbewusstsein»²⁷⁵.

This position is often linked to a broader approach to competency-based education, where the emphasis is not on learning procedures or tactics, but on understanding the context, risks, and consequences.

A series of articles in «Die Zeit» highlights that the Bundeswehr's entirely voluntary recruitment model faces challenges in attracting young people to military service, although it remains numerically competitive. Here, proponents of basic training argue that early exposure to the concepts of defense can lay the groundwork for a later voluntary choice of a military career, which will ultimately help resolve personnel issues²⁷⁶. As evidence, we can cite the following statement «Je früher man mit Fragen der Sicherheit konfrontiert wird, desto eher entscheidet man sich bewusst für den Dienst»²⁷⁷. However, such arguments do not rule out voluntarism; rather, they aim to broaden the informational and motivational landscape surrounding military service.

Supporters of military training often use a comparative approach in their arguments. Articles in «Die Zeit» cite examples from Finland, Sweden, and Norway, where various forms of youth training and service have long been part of the national security culture. In these countries, a high level of trust in state institutions and an understanding of the army's role are shaped to a large extent by educational and social practices²⁷⁸.

This reinforces the argument that systematically involving young people in discussions about security and defense can help foster more enduring social attitudes, which in the long run strengthens social cohesion and trust in government institutions.

3.Criticism of basic military training for schoolchildren in «Die Zeit»

Although discussions about basic military training for students have garnered some support, a significant portion of the media discourse in

²⁷⁵ Hoffmann, J. Verantwortung und Jugend. *Die Zeit*. 2022., Nr. 30. S. 11.

²⁷⁶ Müller, C. Jugend und Bundeswehr. *Die Zeit*. 2023. Nr. 27. S. 6.

²⁷⁷ Schmidt, P. Wahlfreiheit und Vorbereitung. *Die Zeit*. 2023. Nr. 33. S. 14.

²⁷⁸ Neumann, B. Europäische Beispiele. *Die Zeit*. 2024. Nr. 12. S. 13.

«Die Zeit» expresses serious doubts and criticism of this initiative. The criticism is based on several key principles: historical memory, ethical and pedagogical considerations, doubts about practical effectiveness, and the risks of militarizing the educational environment.

One of the main arguments put forward by critics is the historical specificity of German society, which makes any return to mandatory forms of military training particularly sensitive. As the authors of «Die Zeit» emphasize, the memory of the National Socialist dictatorship and the mass military conflicts of the 20th century continues to shape the political identity of today's citizens²⁷⁹. In this regard, we can quote the following statement: «In Deutschland muss jede Form von militärischer Erziehung sorgfältig abgewogen werden, um historische Fehlentwicklungen nicht zu wiederholen»²⁸⁰. This statement clearly demonstrates that even short courses or informational sessions in schools can be perceived as a risk of symbolically reviving the militaristic practices of the past. Critics also point to the educational risks. Incorporating military themes into school curricula could lead to the romanticization of war and oversimplified views of conflict among students. «Die Zeit» repeatedly emphasizes that schools must remain spaces for democratic education and the development of critical thinking: «Schulen sollen kritisches Denken fördern, nicht militärische Disziplin verordnen»²⁸¹.

Educational organizations in Germany have also expressed doubts about the appropriateness of including military elements in educational programs for minors, noting that this could upset the balance between the curriculum and students' social and emotional development.

Some experts quoted in «Die Zeit» argue that short-term basic military training courses are unlikely to solve the Bundeswehr's personnel problems. They emphasize that young people's motivation to serve is largely determined by socioeconomic factors and career prospects, rather than merely by basic knowledge about the military²⁸². In particular, the statement notes: «Selbst die besten Schulprogramme

²⁷⁹ Bendiek, A. *Sicherheitspolitik Deutschlands im Wandel*. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2023. S. 48–50.

²⁸⁰ Hoffmann, K. Historische Verantwortung und militärische Erziehung. *Die Zeit* 2023. Nr. 31. S. 7.

²⁸¹ Albrecht, M. *Schule und kritisches Denken*. *Die Zeit*. 2022. Nr. 44. S. 11.

²⁸² Bald, D. *Die Bundeswehr: Eine kritische Geschichte 1955–2020*. München: Beck, 2020. S. 312–315.

werden nicht automatisch mehr Rekruten für die Bundeswehr bringen»²⁸³. This points to the need for a comprehensive approach to the issue of army recruitment, one that includes social incentives, career opportunities, and volunteer programs.

Critics point out that even the partial involvement of the military in the school system can create an atmosphere of militarization that runs counter to the humanistic tradition of German education. Articles in «Die Zeit» cite examples from federal states where agreements already exist between schools and the Bundeswehr to conduct informational events: «Solche Aktivitäten laufen Gefahr, subtil politische und militärische Loyalität zu fördern»²⁸⁴. This aspect highlights the need for clear regulations and oversight to prevent covert propaganda.

Another important argument concerns the psychological impact on students. The authors of «Die Zeit» emphasize that exposure to weapons, military rituals, or even basic military concepts can foster a simplified or romanticized view of war among young people, which runs counter to the principles of critical thinking and humanism²⁸⁵. In this regard, we can cite an expert's opinion: «Frühes Militärwissen kann zu einer Verklärung von Gewalt führen, die wir in der Schule vermeiden müssen»²⁸⁶.

In response to the criticism, «Die Zeit» proposes alternative ways to prepare young people for today's security challenges, including: expanding courses in civic education, international relations, and media literacy; programs in civil protection and volunteerism; and incorporating simulation games, project-based assignments, and security debates without the involvement of military instructors²⁸⁷. Such alternatives help foster active citizenship and responsibility without the risk of militarizing the educational environment.

²⁸³ Müller, P. Rekrutierung und Motivation junger Menschen. *Die Zeit*. 2023. Nr. 28. S. 5.

²⁸⁴ Fuchs, T. *Militärische Präsenz in Schulen*. *Die Zeit*. 2024. Nr. 6. S. 14.

²⁸⁵ Lange, S. Psychologische Aspekte der Wehrvorbereitung. *Die Zeit*. 2024. Nr. 9. S. 10.

²⁸⁶ Hoffmann, J. Verklärung von Gewalt vermeiden. *Die Zeit*. 2023. Nr. 32. S. 9.

²⁸⁷ Neumann, B. Alternative Bildungswege in Sicherheitsfragen. *Die Zeit*. 2024. Nr. 11. S. 12.

CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of the discussions in «Die Zeit» regarding the introduction of basic military training for German schoolchildren shows that contemporary media discourse in Germany is characterized by highly polarized positions, yet at the same time by a desire to find a compromise between security challenges and humanistic principles of education.

On the one hand, proponents of basic military training argue that it is necessary to enhance defense awareness, foster civic responsibility, and strengthen the Bundeswehr's personnel capacity. Articles in «Die Zeit» reflect the view that early exposure to security and defense issues contributes to informed career choices, a critical understanding of the international situation, and greater social cohesion.

On the other hand, critics highlight the risks of militarizing the educational environment, the pedagogical and psychological dangers, as well as doubts about the practical effectiveness of such measures in building a professional talent pool. Articles in «Die Zeit» emphasize that schools should remain spaces for the development of critical thinking and democratic values, rather than arenas for the early teaching of military discipline.

One of the key findings is that the current debate is not simply a matter of weighing the pros and cons of military training. A significant portion of the literature seeks to strike a balance between historical memory, democratic principles, and current security challenges. In this context, a concept of security education is emerging that encompasses civil protection, international relations, crisis management, and the development of civic competencies, going beyond the teaching of combat skills.

The discussions in «Die Zeit» also demonstrate that society understands Europe's new geopolitical reality following 2022 and recognizes the need for mechanisms to strengthen the country's defense capabilities. At the same time, there remains a strong commitment to preserving the humanistic and democratic foundations of education, which defines the distinctive character of German media discourse.

Thus, the contemporary German media discourse in «Die Zeit» serves as a mirror of broader sociocultural transformations taking place in the spheres of security, education, and civic responsibility. The articles demonstrate the need for a comprehensive approach to youth

education: combining knowledge of security and defense with the development of critical thinking, humanistic values, and democratic consciousness.

Overall, an analysis of the media discourse in «Die Zeit» confirms that any initiatives regarding basic military training must be implemented in coordination with educational policy, civic education, and social programs, ensuring transparency, voluntariness, and respect for the historical context.

ABSTRACT

This section examines the multifaceted media discourse in the German newspaper «Die Zeit» regarding the possibility of introducing mandatory basic military training for schoolchildren in the Federal Republic of Germany. Following the abolition of universal military service in 2011 and amid new challenges to European security, the issue of reinstating various forms of defense training has garnered significant public attention. The pages of «Die Zeit» analyze the positions of supporters and opponents of such initiatives, arguments regarding the need for reforms in defense policy and civic education, as well as criticism of the potential risks of militarizing the educational sphere. The study examines the extent to which these discussions reflect broader trends in contemporary German political culture, combining pragmatic security considerations with historical memory and humanistic values. The study is based primarily on a content analysis of «Die Zeit» publications from 2022 to 2025, utilizing qualitative methods of text interpretation.

АНОТАЦІЯ

У цьому розділі розглядається багатогранний медіадискурс у німецькій газеті «Die Zeit» щодо можливості запровадження обов'язкової базової військової підготовки для школярів у Федеративній Республіці Німеччина. Після скасування загальної військової служби у 2011 році та на тлі нових викликів європейській безпеці питання відновлення різних форм оборонної підготовки привернуло значну увагу громадськості. На сторінках «Die Zeit» аналізуються позиції прихильників та противників таких ініціатив, аргументи щодо необхідності реформ в оборонній політиці та громадянській освіті, а також критика потенційних ризиків милітаризації освітньої сфери. У дослідженні розглядається, якою мі-

рою ці дискусії відображають ширші тенденції сучасної німецької політичної культури, поєднуючи прагматичні міркування безпеки з історичною пам'яттю та гуманістичними цінностями. Дослідження базується, перш за все, на контент-аналізі публікацій «Die Zeit» з 2022 по 2025 рік, використовуючи якісні методи інтерпретації тексту.

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